

ON PAGE **13B**WASHINGTON TIMES
27 February 1987

Gates nomination may be in trouble

By Jennifer Spevacek
and Bill Gertz
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Questions raised by the Tower report on the CIA role in the Iran-Contra affair may endanger the nomination of Robert Gates to become director of the Central Intelligence Agency, several lawmakers said yesterday.

The report calls into question testimony Mr. Gates gave the Senate Intelligence Committee in confirmation hearings last week, said Sen. Bill Bradley, New Jersey Democrat and a member of the committee.

Mr. Gates also has admitted he was dealing with National Security Council aides last year at the time those NSC aides were putting together a false chronology of the Iran-Contra affair, the Intelligence Committee said.

The new statement by Mr. Gates, and questions raised by the Tower report, may put the nomination in jeopardy, said Sen. William Cohen, Maine Republican, and vice-chairman of the panel.

"This could cause some trouble," Mr. Cohen said. "It's certainly something we'll want to look into more when we meet next week," when the panel will hold closed hearings on the nomination.

Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd — who met yesterday with Sen. David Boren, Oklahoma Democrat and Intelligence Committee chairman — said he agrees with Mr. Boren that the Gates nomination should be delayed.

"All the facts are not in and won't be in for some time," Mr. Byrd said. "He is not going to act in haste."

Mr. Bradley said the Tower report "contradicts Mr. Gates' testimony ... when he denied that neither he nor anyone working for him was aware that any policy change toward Iran was under discussion at the White House."

Mr. Gates, is currently the acting director of the agency.

In open hearings last week, Mr. Gates said he first learned of the

possible diversion of funds to the Nicaraguan Contras on Oct. 1, when a CIA analyst told him the Iran operation was in danger of being disclosed publicly.

The suspicions about the possible diversion were not communicated to Mr. Casey until a week later, however, and were omitted from Mr. Casey's Nov. 21 testimony before the Intelligence Committee.

Several senators have questioned Mr. Gates, who helped prepare Mr. Casey's testimony, about why the information was withheld from the committee. Mr. Gates said he would have told the panel earlier about his role, but he wasn't aware it would be interested.

In the document released yesterday, Mr. Gates provided new information about his involvement with NSC aide Lt. Col. Oliver North last November, at the same time Lt. Col. North was reportedly preparing a misleading chronology of the Iran-Contra affair.

"Mid-week, several disputes arose between the CIA and NSC with respect to dates and other aspects relevant to the testimony being prepared," Mr. Gates said in a written statement.

On Nov. 17, "my records show that I made a telephone call to Lt. Col. North at 1845 [6:45 p.m.] I have no record of the subject of that call," Mr. Gates stated.

On Nov. 19, Mr. Gates wrote, he talked three more times to Lt. Col. North. He said he believed the calls were about Mr. Casey's testimony, but "there is no record and I do not remember specifically."

Later that day, Mr. Gates and other CIA officials met with then National Security Adviser John Poindexter to settle the differences about who authorized a shipment of arms sent to Iran aboard a CIA-owned airline on Nov. 23, 1985.

"I told Adm. Poindexter that we had a serious problem, in that Lt. Col. North's recollection of who requested the November 1985 flight differed from our own," Mr. Gates stated.